

closely with that committee. That committee's report has much to offer this Council. Now is the time to take the next step in making this Legislative Council a more informed place and in helping members carry out their duties more effectively. One member of the Opposition who has taken a great interest in the need for a committee system is my colleague Hon Bob Pike. The parliamentary Liberal Party has appointed Hon Bob Pike to draw up some terms of reference for a number of committees that he and his committee colleagues believe could be of assistance to this House. I look forward to hearing Hon Bob Pike's comments on this matter.

If ever there were a time for party politics to be taken out of the Legislative Council, it is when we are discussing the need for some additional committees or the restructuring of committees as they are. I recognise that some members will say that, with the current sitting times of the House, they would have great difficulty in serving on any additional committees; but there are opportunities for this House to determine sitting times that are convenient to members. For example, if Wednesdays were to be considered as committee days, then the House would not sit in a formal sense on Wednesdays. That may alleviate some of the problems. The real purpose behind talking about the need for changing the committee system is to enable members to take the advice of experts and others on the legislation that is presented to the House. As the Leader of the House confirmed to me earlier today, the Government has a considerable legislative program, although I do not have the full details of it.

I am honoured to be a member of the Legislative Council. I thank all those electors in North Metropolitan Region who voted for me at the last election. I hope that I can serve them with honour and distinction and I certainly intend to serve those in the North Metropolitan Region who did not vote for me. It is interesting that, after an election, one thing that becomes very clear is that it seems 110 per cent of people in a constituency seem, for some reason, to be able to tell one that they supported one all the way. If that is the case, and I was supported by 110 per cent in North Metropolitan Region, I do not know from where the Leader of the House gets his 110 per cent, as we both represent the same area. Again, I look forward to serving the Legislative Council and working with all members in the interests of the State of Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind honourable members that, as this is the honourable member's maiden speech, I expect the normal courtesies to be extended to him.

HON BOB THOMAS (South West) [4.38 pm]: I support the motion. Before I present my maiden speech I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, on being re-elected President of this House. The fact that you are now the longest serving President or Speaker in any House in Australia is a reflection of your impartiality and of the confidence that this House holds in you. Considering the political volatility that we have experienced over the last decade or so, your record is even more meritorious. I also congratulate Hon Joe Berinson on being returned as Leader of the Government in this House. The Leader of the House is clearly one of the most capable members to have sat in this Chamber and I am sure that he enjoys the respect of every member of this House.

I am sure that the other Government frontbench members in this place enjoy that same respect. Hon Kay Hallahan and Hon Graham Edwards are two of the most caring Ministers of this Government and I congratulate them on their re-election to their positions. I also congratulate the Opposition frontbench members on their election to their positions. I extend special congratulations to Hon Jim Brown who has been elected Chairman of Committees. He has many special qualities and I am sure he will serve this House well. I congratulate my colleagues who were returned to this House at the election on 4 February. I extend special congratulations to Hon Cheryl Davenport who was elected to her first term in Parliament in February. I do not think it will be long before she represents the Labor Party on the frontbench. I also congratulate the Opposition members who were elected at the February elections, especially the new members.

It is fitting that three members of this House come from Albany and I extend a special welcome to Hon Muriel Paterson and Hon Murray Montgomery and I hope that we will spend more time working together, rather than against each other, so we can benefit the beautiful town of Albany.

Before I proceed I would like to acknowledge the influence which four women have had on

my life and which I believe has precipitated my becoming a member of Parliament. Naturally, I owe a great deal to my mother, June Thomas. She is a remarkable woman and I owe more to her than most sons owe their mother. When I was 11 years old my father left my mother and returned to his home State of New South Wales. He left behind seven children, of which I was the eldest. We moved to York where my mother was allocated a State Housing Commission home and the eight members of my family survived on the civilian widow's pension. Although things were hard we were a close-knit and happy family. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the sacrifices my mother made to keep the family together and to give her children the opportunity to finish their schooling in a stable environment. She gave us a good start to life which, in my case, was invaluable for the life path I am now following.

I have been married to my wife, Carol, since 1976 and I acknowledge her support and steadying influence on my life. She is the most caring person I know and has taught me to believe in myself. I would not be here today had I not received the support and encouragement Carol has given me over the years.

The other two women I will acknowledge today had an enormous influence on my attitude to schooling and the career path I followed. Mary Carmichael was a school teacher at the York District High School when I first attended it in 1967. She encouraged me to work hard at school and was particularly supportive. This was important to me because I came from an impoverished background and experienced self-doubt associated with the family break-up. My mother had her hands full with three toddlers at that time and she did not have the opportunity to involve herself in my education to the extent she would have liked to. Mary's encouragement made up for that and she had a great influence on the career on which I am embarking. Mary retired as principal of that school last year and I wish her a long and healthy retirement.

Margaret Ferguson also had an impact on my career choice. She visited the York District High School in 1969 as a vocational guidance officer with the then Department of Labour and National Service. She was horrified when I informed her that I intended to pursue a career as a tradesman and she took a great deal of trouble to try to persuade me not to pursue that course of action and suggested that I seek further education. I did not take heed of her advice and at the end of Year 10 took up a fitting and turning apprenticeship. It was not long before I realised that I had no mechanical aptitude and this prompted me to contact Margaret for advice. Rather than saying, "I told you so", she was extremely supportive and helped me to obtain a scholarship in order that I could return to school. Her encouragement was invaluable and I am pleased to be able to say that after I completed my degree and before her retirement last year I had the pleasure of working with her in the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations.

I have the honour of representing the most exciting region in Western Australia and I will use the time allocated to me today to speak about some of the issues in my province in which I am interested. The South West Region extends from Mandurah in the north to Albany in the south and includes all that area to the west of a line between those two towns. It is the fastest growing area in Australia and last year its growth was equal to that of the whole of South Australia or seven times that of Tasmania. That growth is no more evident than in the areas on which I will concentrate: Albany, Manjimup and Pemberton.

I moved to the south west in 1985 when those areas which I have mentioned were experiencing depressed business activity as a result of the recession of the early 1980s. Unemployment in Albany and Manjimup was higher than the State average and people were leaving those towns to seek work elsewhere. Today those towns have more vibrant economies and people are moving back to them because jobs are available, the environment is unique and the quality of life is superb. The State Government can take credit for the upturn in those areas. The upturn cannot be attributed only to the rural recovery in this State; it occurred also because the State Government made important decisions that have underpinned the recovery of Albany and Manjimup.

In Manjimup the State Government, through the previous member for Warren, Dave Evans, and the previous Minister for Agriculture, Julian Grill, has carried out a tremendous amount of work to develop export markets in South-East Asia for horticultural products. The two men I mentioned visited South-East Asia and played a role in developing what is now a

lucrative window of opportunity. The establishment of the Manjimup Horticulture Research Centre and its work on new varieties of horticultural products has been invaluable to the horticultural industry. The Government's decision in 1986 to buy out the Manjimup Canning Cooperative Co Ltd's debts of several million dollars was also invaluable to the region. This allowed Edgell-Birds Eye to purchase the cannery and to expand its operations to include the production of French fries. The multiplier effect from that decision has been enormous. Edgell-Birds Eye is now buying several million dollars' worth of potatoes per year from the local producers and is assisting the economy by employing twice as many employees as it did previously and by operating for 10 months of the year instead of between four to six months, the period in which it previously operated.

The other major decision made by this Government which has had an impact on the economic recovery in Manjimup was the major overhaul of the forest and timber industries. State forests were divided into conservation forests and production or multiple use forests. The timber industry was given security of tenure of access to the timber resource within the production forests by way of 15-year licences. The new licences replaced the previous one-year licence and broke the vicious cycle in which companies were not prepared to invest in more efficient technology because they had a guaranteed access to the resource for only one year at a time. The timber industry has now embarked on a massive investment program which will involve \$150 million being pumped in the industry over the next few years. We have already seen the results of this in the new laser technology mill at Bunnings, Pemberton, the new plastic wrap kiln drying facility installed at the Manjimup Production Centre and at the new state of the art mill owned by Whitakers at Greenbushes.

These initiatives have been implemented against the backdrop of successful State Government policies which have given Western Australia the highest employment growth, the lowest youth unemployment rate, the highest rate of home building, the highest rate of population growth and the highest rate of private investment.

The rapid turn around in Manjimup's economy has brought with it some minor problems and I will outline them for the benefit of members. My first concern for the district is the need for a full-time day care centre which is essential to ensure that the labour market functions efficiently. As the officer in charge of the Commonwealth Employment Service in Manjimup for the four years between 1985 and 1988, I think I am well qualified to talk on this issue. I have seen the economy become so strong that there are shortages of skilled labour in almost all occupations in the Manjimup area. I would estimate the rate of unemployment in that area at about half of the State average and would expect the demand for labour to increase further as more tourism, horticulture, timber, and food processing projects come on stream. This will place an enormous strain on an already tight labour market, which has very little scope to expand owing to a relatively small population base and a housing shortage which is discouraging people from moving into the area.

One way of overcoming this problem is to provide a full time day care centre so that more women can be enticed back into the work force. I know that Manjimup already has a high female participation rate in the work force, but from my experience in the CES I can tell members that many more women would return to the work force if day care were available. I also know that many employers are unable to find the right person for their job because the lack of child care is a barrier to some highly skilled women returning to work.

Last year I was instrumental in forming the Manjimup day care committee. As a group we have lobbied both Government departments and Ministers. In particular, we put much effort into persuading the Manjimup Shire Council and the South West Development Authority that a child care facility should be included in stage 1 of the Manjimup Community Centre. I was disappointed that we were not successful in having it included in stage 1 of that centre, which is currently under construction. However, I am heartened by the fact that the Minister for South-West and the Manjimup Shire Council are examining the feasibility of proceeding with stage 2, which will include provision for a child care centre. I am confident that this project will be funded in the Budget next year. I will continue to do everything in my power as a Legislative Councillor representing the area to ensure that Manjimup has a full time day care centre as soon as possible.

I am also concerned about the effect the housing shortage in Manjimup is having on local industry. Again from my CES experience, I have a first hand knowledge of this problem.

The Manjimup Shire Council has taken a proactive role in this matter and has explored options such as a local government and a community housing project. I understand that three houses have been built under this scheme and more would be built if they were able to secure funding. I do not have any simple answers to this problem, but I see it as my job, as a Government backbencher, to keep this matter before the relevant Ministers. I also see the Government's role as playing some part in ensuring that all social and capital infrastructure is in place for industry to create the wealth and jobs that our communities depend on. Housing is one of those infrastructures.

The other half of the electorate on which I concentrate my energies is the Albany area. This is the most central regional centre in my part of the electorate and for that reason I have moved there and set up my electorate office. I am still infatuated with the scenic beauty of the place and must say that it is a tremendous place in which to live and bring up children. Like Manjimup's economy, the Albany economy is becoming more vibrant and its population is expanding. The building industry is buoyant and retail trade is expanding. Several new hotel accommodation projects have begun or are about to begin. Unemployment has fallen significantly. Investor confidence is high and there is an air of optimism about the town. Albany really is a great place to live.

I do not propose using my time today to praise the achievements of this Government in my area, and there are many. Instead, I will discuss three issues which I think require immediate attention. The first issue is the problem of dieback in our magnificent banksia forests. The cochinia and baxterine, or red and yellow species of banksia, grow only in the coastal strip which extends eastward from Albany for about 80 kilometres and north as far as the Porongurups. The area contains unique and beautiful flowering trees and is one of the district's major tourist attractions.

I am concerned that the spread of dieback in these forests is accelerating and that we could soon lose a particularly beautiful part of our heritage. Dieback - or *Phytophthora cinnamomi* - is a microscopic fungus which is water borne and which lives in the soil, killing some species of plants because it rots their roots thereby preventing them from taking up water. There is no wholesale means of eradicating this disease. I therefore feel that we need to pursue aggressively every available avenue to prevent it from spreading any further than it already has.

I have spent some time out in the area which is the proposed Gull Rock National Park and I am alarmed at the amount of area which appears to be affected. I am aware that there is considerable evidence suggesting a correlation between the activities of wildflower pickers and the spread of this disease. Because of this I have written to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management suggesting that he host a summit of all the people who have interests in banksia forests and that a working plan to be drawn up. I have also suggested that the local Department of Conservation and Land Management office employ a community education officer to work exclusively on raising community awareness of this serious problem. As I have said previously, we cannot eradicate this disease, therefore we must do everything possible to control it.

There have been two very progressive decisions made by local government authorities in my areas. The Albany Town Council made a decision to prevent wildflower pickers entering council reserves. The Albany Shire Council showed its concern for this issue by making it the basis of an appeal in the Warden's Court against mineral sands mining in the Bonnocorde Road area. The groups I expect to be represented at this summit include CALM and the other relevant Government agencies, the wildflower industry, all the local government authorities in the great southern, viticulturists, the tourism industry and local farmers who may be interested in growing banksias commercially. I hope sincerely that all of those groups are prepared to work together and that we can do something to preserve this most beautiful species of tree. I understand that Hon Murray Montgomery is also interested in this issue. I believe he will be talking on it in his maiden speech. I give the commitment that I will endeavour at all times to work with Hon Murray Montgomery on this issue, which is an important one to the whole of Albany and the great southern.

I will now speak briefly on an issue which concerns residents in the small settlements of Elleker and Cuthbert near Albany. This is the issue of siting a waste water treatment plant in Cuthbert. The residents fear that such a plant could have an adverse effect on their lifestyle.

Their fears stem from a waste water treatment study released recently by the Water Authority which includes three options for a treatment plant in the Cuthbert area.

[Questions without notice taken.]

[Resolved, that business be continued.]

Hon BOB THOMAS: Although the report is only at the public comment stage, some residents are concerned that the siting of any such plant in the area would add to the already serious environmental problems they are experiencing. A large part of Elleker is built on reclaimed swamp land, made possible by the diversion of the Marbleup Brook away from Thompson Lake and into the Torbay inlet. An intricate system of plugs and gates has controlled the flow of water into the lake and stopped the regular backflooding in winter. That has brought with it some problems with an increase in the nutrient level and lower water levels in the lake. The lake now has a serious algae problem and has a severe bad smell. On top of this the residents claim that the midge problem has gone from bad to worse. I share the residents' concern and I will endeavour to do two things: First, I will ask the Minister for Water Resources to assure me, and the residents, that every option to the east of Albany has been properly costed; secondly, if there are no alternative sites to the east of Albany, I will urge the Minister to consider only site 6(c), which appeared to me to be more environmentally benign as it is located in sand hills.

I will take that action against the following backdrop: We, as a Government, have the responsibility to ensure that the local economy remains healthy in order that all people have access to jobs and training opportunities through which they can provide for themselves and their families. To do this in Albany we need to retain the existing industries and provide a climate to attract new industries. This cannot be done until we address the problem of sewage and waste water disposal. The Cuthbert site might be the only suitable site for such a plant. If it is, I am sure that the nearby residents will accept its construction because it will help underpin the economic prosperity of the whole greater Albany area. The residents of Elleker and Cuthbert recognise their dependence on Albany for jobs and other services, but have every right to have every other possible site considered.

The other issue I will raise is the lack of a community health centre in Albany. When I moved to the town I was surprised that no such facility existed. I resolved to do everything in my power to obtain a community health centre in Albany. The Community Health Services offices are located in most inappropriate buildings on 29 Albany Highway, Albany. They have a serious drainage problem, a total lack of confidentiality in the offices, areas inaccessible for the handicapped, and little or no parking for clients. The other health services are scattered throughout the town and, because of this lack of centralisation, they are poorly advertised and poorly attended. Building a centre would bring them together and break down the stigma that is associated with their use and hopefully would bring people to use the services that they did not previously know existed. Mr Gordon Hill, the Minister for Regional Development, and I have approached the Minister for Health on this question, and I am grateful that he has agreed to consider providing funds for a community health centre in Albany in the 1990-91 Budget. I will do everything possible to see that this is given the highest possible priority.

I have used my first speech in this House to speak about some of the problems I see in my electorate, but I assure members that the State Government has an impressive record in my area and I intend to inform the House of this at every opportunity.

[Applause.]

HON DERRICK TOMLINSON (East Metropolitan) [5.37 pm]: I support the motion moved by Hon George Cash.

I congratulate Hon Bob Thomas on his maiden speech. He began by describing his origins and may I say that the fact he came into this place from such humble beginnings is a testament to Western Australia as a land of opportunity, it is a testament to the democratic process, but, more importantly, it is a testament to Hon Bob Thomas as a man.

I raise the matter of land use in the east metropolitan area, in particular in the Darling Ranges and the Escarpment. Together the Range and the Escarpment form a unique part of the metropolitan area. There are strongly held opinions that, while it is probably inevitable that parts of them will be developed for urban housing, every effort should be made to preserve